

The Senate fiscal year 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill took an important first step toward providing adequate LIHEAP funds by including \$2.183 billion for the program for next fiscal year. This is a good starting point.

However, \$2.183 billion represents only a very slight increase over fiscal year 2005 levels and is likely not enough to meet the needs of LIHEAP beneficiaries in the coming winter.

For this reason, I have worked to find ways to increase funding for the LIHEAP program and to do so in a manner that is fiscally responsible. The Reed amendment would have added \$2.92 billion to the LIHEAP program and paid for this increase by taxing the windfall profits of major oil companies.

Some have criticized this windfall profits tax. Yet I believe that a temporary, limited tax on the windfall profits of energy companies is a reasonable way to help the least fortunate among us pay for their home energy needs.

Indeed, I believe that the country's oil producers can afford to help pay for LIHEAP. Last month they posted record profits. ExxonMobil reported that their profits rose 75 percent, and in just 3 months they made \$9.92 billion in profit. Similar record profits have been reported by all of the major integrated oil companies. Some of this increase in profit is due to oil prices that started to rise this summer even before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the gulf coast. After the hurricanes, though, the price of gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and other refined oil products soared.

Our Nation is still struggling to recover from the disasters along the gulf coast. All Americans have had to make sacrifices as a result. This winter the country is facing another crisis, record energy prices and associated increased household heating bills.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, consumers who heat their homes with natural gas prices—about 55 percent of U.S. households—are expected to see their heating bills rise by 48 percent this winter. Those who heat with oil will pay 32 percent more, those who heat with propane will pay 30 percent more, and those who heat with electricity will pay 5 percent more.

These increases will take the greatest toll on the least fortunate among us. Low-income Americans will have a harder time heating their homes and may turn their heat down dangerously low in hopes of being able to pay their monthly bills.

That is why the LIHEAP program is so important. LIHEAP provides vital home energy assistance to low-income families to help them weatherize their homes and pay their energy bills.

The Reed amendment would have asked the oil companies that have profited so much from recent rising energy

prices to help ease the burden of this winter's high prices.

I am pleased with the approach taken by the Reed amendment because I believe that we should try to pay for increases in spending. I have been uncomfortable supporting some previous amendments to increase funding for the LIHEAP program because they did not find a way to pay for the increased spending.

Senator REED has found a way not only to fully fund this vital program, but to pay for it as well.

Unfortunately, Senator REED's amendment was not accepted by the full Senate during consideration of the tax reconciliation bill. The amendment needed 60 votes to overcome a point of order and received only 50.

We will keep trying though.

The LIHEAP program serves a vital function in helping as many as 5 million low-income households who need a bit of help paying their energy bills or weatherizing their homes. I'm pleased to have been a cosponsor of the Reed amendment and I will continue to look for ways to increase funding for the LIHEAP program.

#### INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise to say a few words about the resolution I submitted and which was approved by unanimous consent on the Senate floor this week, in support of the President's position on Internet governance at the U.N. Summit on the Information Society. I thank the cosponsors on this resolution: Senators STEVENS, INOUE, LEAHY, SMITH, SUNUNU, BILL NELSON, HUTCHISON, INHOFE and CRAIG. And I also acknowledge Senator COLEMAN for all his good work on this issue.

No one can really control the Internet. It is not supposed to be controlled. It is an architecture, literally and figuratively, of freedom—freedom of information, of speech, of interconnection, of religion. Because the Internet was developed and commercialized in the United States, it reflects those core American values, and boosts them all around the world. And the United States should be proud of the way it has handled the growth of the Internet—particularly in the way it has kept the private sector experts in charge, and government bureaucrats out.

I have been particularly concerned the status of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, ICANN, the private, expert body that oversees and manages the Internet's Domain Name System. This is the "plumbing" that makes each Internet site unique and keeps the Internet a global unitary network. The United States created ICANN and its unique model of oversight, with the input of international stakeholders. And U.S. Government oversight of ICANN has been critical in making ICANN more responsive and more capable of carrying out its important technical mis-

sion. ICANN is not perfect. I have been critical of its shortcomings in the past, and will continue to do so in the future. But I strongly support its model of governance that leaves the private-sector experts in charge.

The preliminary news from the U.N. conference seems to be good. Some of the worst ideas, such as creating a new U.N. bureaucracy instead of ICANN, or to direct ICANN, seem to have been avoided. But I will look closely at the final results and make sure that nothing has been agreed to that could damage the Internet. I hope to hold a hearing in the Commerce Committee early next year about this, and I look forward to hearing the testimony of the key stakeholders at that time.

#### THE SUCCESS OF THE 1994 BRADY ACT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, statistics released last month by the Department of Justice indicate that the 1994 Brady Act has had a meaningful impact on keeping firearms out of the hands of criminals. The annual Bureau of Justice Statistics bulletin titled "Background Checks for Firearms Transfers" reveals that nearly 126,000 firearm transactions to prohibited individuals were prevented in 2004 alone.

As my colleagues know, the 1994 Brady Act requires individuals seeking to acquire guns from a federally licensed firearms dealer to undergo a background check. This process requires the applicant to provide a variety of personal information, which is not retained longer than 4 days unless the person is prohibited by law from receiving or possessing firearms. The primary factors that disqualify individuals from receiving firearms include felony or domestic violence convictions, identification as a fugitive or illegal alien, substance abuse, and serious mental illness. Unfortunately, membership in a known terrorist organization does not automatically disqualify an applicant from receiving or possessing a firearm under current law. This is one of the loopholes in our gun safety laws that should be addressed by Congress.

The Department of Justice reports that since enactment of the 1994 Brady Act, more than 1.2 million applications for firearms transfers have been rejected because disqualifying information was uncovered during a background check of the applicant. Of the applications that were rejected in 2004, 44 percent were rejected because the applicant had been convicted of or was under indictment for a felony offense. In addition, 16 percent were rejected because of domestic violence convictions or a related restraining order.

According to the Department of Justice statistics, almost 80 percent of the rejected applicants in 2004 had a serious criminal history, had been involved in domestic violence, or were identified as a fugitive. This means that nearly 100,000 times last year, criminals and